

PREFACE

where *et cetera* is written, many words are passed over, which it is not meet that every one should know, nor even the name of him to whom it went." ¹ Neither these words nor the omissions are due to Aldo himself; the same heading occurs in every manuscript containing this letter which I have examined, and evidently dates back to the end of the fourteenth century. Other letters, though for different reasons, have been subjected to a similar process, with the general result that, even in the editions of Gigli and Tommaseo, the text is still sadly corrupt and too often mutilated. The printed versions of several apparently short letters are little more than the devout exhortations with which Catherine usually opened her correspondence, the real substance of what she had to say being in these cases still unpublished. Of peculiar interest and importance in this connection are two manuscripts which have hitherto strangely escaped the notice of students : the Casanatense MS. 292, and the MS. numbered xxxviii. 130 in the Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze ; both of which were evidently copied direct from Catherine's original letters. The former contains the full text of a number of those written in her name from Rome by Barduccio Canigiani; the latter the authentic and complete version of her correspondence with the Florentine tailor, Francesco di Pippino, and his wife, Monna Agnese, after the Saint's final departure from Florence. In an appendix to the present volume, besides six entirely new letters of St. Catherine, I print two of these latter in full, by comparison of which with the previously published versions, the reader may estimate the amount of work still to be done by whoso would restore to the world the true and complete correspondence of the seraphic virgin. I am not without hope of myself ultimately undertaking this task, unless some scholar in Italy should, in the meanwhile, accomplish it.

Catherine's great literary work, the *Diakgo*, was published at Bologna in 1472, at Naples in 1478, and at Venice in 1494. A number of editions were printed at Venice in the course of the sixteenth century. It was translated into Latin by Ser ¹ Letter 21 (306). Cf. *Dia/ogo*, cap. 124. xiv